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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire survey of 180 Texas school district superintendents sought to determine both their perceptions of how community power structures influenced school board decisions and their techniques for communicating with their local power structure. The study analyzed four power structure types--monopolistic, multigroup noncompetitive, competitive elite, and democratic pluralistic--in relation to school district size, 13 educational decision-making areas, and 13 communication techniques between superintendents and power structures. Among the study's findings were that (1) monopolistic power structures occurred more often in small school districts; (2) power structure types were not strongly associated with particular decision-making areas; (3) power structures of all types had more influence on "external" educational decisions, such as school board membership, than on "internal" ones, such as textbook selection; (4) superintendents preferred to communicate with community power structures through school-connected channels rather than third parties; and (5) all superintendents felt their power structure communication techniques were inadequate, although superintendents in larger districts perceived more communication success than those in small districts. The author concludes that superintendents need to know their community power structure's type and areas of influence, and need to develop better communication techniques with their local power structures. (RW)

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURE ON SCHOOL BOARD DECISION-MAKING

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The local school district is an extension of the state that exists for the sole purpose of carrying out the function of public education (Reutter and Hamilton, 1970:2-7). According to Nunnery and Kimbrough (1976:331-332), schools are political organizations, and educational politics have become influential in the formulation of educational policies. Thus, community power structures tend to influence policies developed in a local school district.

A study by Zeigler and Jennings (1974:78) indicated that three-fifths of 490 public school board members polled in a national survey suggested that they had received pressure to support certain community power groups. Hughes (1967:33) has stated that school board members are often drawn from levels that are supportive to the local community power structure.

According to a National School Board Association (NSBA) (1975:9) research report, school board members are influenced by power groups in relation to their perception of being either a trustee or delegate school board. The trustee board oversees the school on the basis of their understanding of the "public interest." The trustee board was the basic pattern for school boards fifty years ago. But, recently, school boards with the delegate attitude have become commonplace. The members of the delegate board feel they serve to express the public will. Present-day school boards of this type tend to reflect particular interest groups in a local community (National School Board Association Research Report, 1975:9). In a study of Massachusett's education, Gross (1958:136) found a variety of pressures placed on school board members to develop programs which various individuals and power groups in the community conceived as being important for the local school district.

Goldhammer (1955:24-25) stated that those elected to school boards usually represent some power structure in the community.

> . . . In many instances the school board candidate represented the power aspirations of some particular group within the community. Hence, a church group wanted to control certain school policies; consequently, it endeavored to secure the election of its members to school board positions. Similarly, groups in rural areas and business interests with the community sought to control school policies through the election of dedicated members of their groups. Lively contests for position ensued when groups felt that they were not adequately represented and when they felt that school policies were inimical to their interest.
>
> For the most part, school board members represented men of substance in the community. Length of residence, relative economic security, acceptance of the values and moral codes of the community – all were important qualifications for school board candidates.

Goldhammer (1955:24-25) also found that, though school board members claimed to represent the whole community, a study of their contacts and interactions revealed that their associations were concentrated in narrow segments of the community.

Kimbrough (1964:195-219) has stated that school administrators, in general, have not recognized the influence exercised by power structure on basic educational projects and policies. There has been a reluctance by some school superintendents to recognize that educational decisions are not always made in formal school board sessions. There has been a reluctance of school superintendents to become involved in the power structure to promote these projects and policies (Kimbrough, 1964:195-219).

In a political system such as a school district, there will be decisions made affecting the local community, and consequently the power structure in the community will tend to influence the decision-making process. Therefore, it seemed appropriate at this time to investigate the perceptions of school superintendents regarding the influence of the community power structure on school board decision-making.

Statement of the Problem

The major problem of this investigation was to determine the perceptions of Texas public school superintendents regarding the influence of the community power structure on school board decision-making. A secondary concern was the utilization of techniques by school superintendents in communicating with the power structure.

Significance of the Study

As Kimbrough (1964:195) has stated, school administrators, in general, have not recognized the influence exercised by the community power structure on basic educational projects and policies developed by local school boards. In addition, there has been a reluctance by school superintendents to recognize that educational decisions are not always made in formal meetings of the school boards. There has also been a reluctance for school superintendents to become involved in the power structure to promote educational projects and policies (Kimbrough, 1964:195-219).

According to Hughes (1967:33):

> If the institution of education is to serve its function as an instrument for orderly change and progress, the professional educator must develop a thorough understanding of the nature of power and power structure in the community as well as effective means of dealing with that structure.

School boards seem to be related to or dependent upon the community power structure as a decision-making body, and the superintendent's relationship to the power structure appears critical for the success of the total school program.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this study and are defined for understanding:

Community Power Structure refers to the interrelationship of the possessors of power in the community.

Power refers to "potentiality for inducing forces in another person towards acting or changing in a given direction" (Lippitt and others, 1953:436).

School Board Decision making refers to the process in determining board policy, procedure, appointment of personnel, evaluation of the school program, and the deliberations that result from this body formally or informally (Knezevich, 1975:319-323).

School Superintendent refers to the chief executive officer charged with the direction of the school in a local school administrative unit.

Size of School District refers to the size of school districts in this study based upon average daily attendance.

Group	ADA	Typical Athletic Classification	Number of Districts
I	Up to 700	A & AA	60
II	701-1,800	AAA	60
III	1,801-3,999	AAAA	60
IV	4,000 or more	AAAAA	60

Types of Power Structures refers to power system typologies (Nunnery and Kimbrough, 1971:15, 18):

1. Monopolistic–Small group of influential citizens dictating major policies for community and school.
2. Multigroup Noncompetitive–Two or more separate power groups having reached a high degree of agreement about the type of community and school they want.
3. Competitive Elite–Two or more power groups in extreme competition regarding the type of community and school they want.
4. Democratic Pluralism–Two or more power groups in competition, but the system is open to the emergence of new groups of influence as issues and decisions change.

Delimitation of the Study

The study was limited to Texas school districts participating in university interscholastic athletics. The representative sample was chosen from the total population based upon an average daily attendance factor. Generalizations beyond this population must be carefully considered on the basis of sociological variables comparable to this population.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature related to the study. Chapter 3 reviews the procedures used for the collection and treatment of the data used for the study. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the findings, and Chapter 5 presents a summary, the conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is divided into three major subsections. The subsections include: (1) community power structures, (2) educational areas of concern to the community power structure, and (3) techniques employed by the superintendent to communicate with the community power structure.

Community Power Structure

In every community, there can be found a process for the determination of policies to maintain the local social system. The power structure of a community was found to be a "distribution of power" among individuals who determine the type of community which fits their needs (Nunnery and Kimbrough, 1971:8).

Sumption and Engstrom (1966:12) accept this concept of power structure and defined it "... as an interrelationship of vested interests exercising power without social responsibility." Walton (1966:430) defined the power structure "... as the characteristic pattern within a social organization whereby resources are mobilized and sanctions employed in ways that affect the organization as a whole." Regardless of the definition, researchers have reported that power structures vary from "highly organized multi-leveled organizations to simple single-leveled organizations," depending on the community in which they exist. These power structures have also differed as to the degree of influence they exerted on communities throughout the United States (Sumption and Engstrom 1966:12).

The Nature and Characteristics of Power Structures

The basic characteristics of power structures will vary in different communities as much as power structures do in the amount of influence they possess. However, power structures have common characteristics which may be used to identify them regardless of community size.

According to Sumption and Engstrom (1966:13-18) and Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1976:45-46), these characteristics are:

1. Power structures exert power for self-interest goals.
2. Power structures control the areas of social, economic, and political life.
3. Power structures' members tend to work in the background through lower ranking representatives who have decision-making responsibilities.
4. Power structures will use their "resources as reward for those who comply with their opinions and as weapons" against those who do not accept the power structure positions.
5. Power structures are not accountable for social or political actions.
6. Power structures tend to protect the status quo.
7. Power structure representatives associate with influential clubs and organizations where they have "numerous contacts with others of their kind" so as to influence club members to assist in the promotion of ideas they desire.
8. Power structure members represent a cross sectional of business and professional leaders in the community.
9. Power structure members are concerned with the financial status of the community. However, when the public welfare on an issue does not parallel with their interest, the power structure may attempt to influence the final decision.

Power Typologies

Walton (1966:430-434) summarized thirty-three studies dealing with fifty-five communities and established four basic power typologies. The community power structure types were: (1) pyramidal monolithic, or single concentrated leadership groups, (2) fractional–at least two durable fractions, (3) coalition–fluid coalitions of interest usually varying with the issues, and (4) amorphous–absence of any persistent pattern of leadership.

The studies of Hickcox (1967), Walton (1966), and Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1976) are closely aligned with the community power studies of Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971). Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971:14-18) suggest there are four basic types of power structures associated with community life and school operations. The four typologies are: (1) monopolistic–run by single groups of individuals, (2) multi-group noncompetitive–the influentials and their followers have reached a high degree of agreement about the kind of school they desire, which results in a "no

demand" for change in the basic structure of the school, (3) competitive elite systems–two or more groups involved in a "regime conflict," and (4) democratic pluralism–power typology which is open to new persons or groups for input as issues change.

Education, Power Structure, and Politics

Since power structures are a part of the educational process, and their wishes are felt by the school community, it follows that schools must learn to live with power structures and "neutralize some of their action when necessary" (Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher, 1976:46). Accordingly, school administrators must develop a thorough understanding of the nature of power.

The perception of school politics as being good or bad is a value decision. The populace of a school district will not have the same values about education. Thus, there will be a difference of opinion, and politics will be the process for reaching a final decision. If the political decision-making function is "exemplary of democratic values," it can be suggested as being good politics. But, if politics are based on "graft" or in the denial of the educational progress for a local school because of a selfish reason, then politics may be viewed as bad (Nunnery and Kimbrough, 1976: 333-334).

Educational Areas Involved by Power Structures

The balance of power between school administrators, school boards, and communities varies in accordance to type of power structure and type of educational issue being faced by the school and community (Boyd, 1976:566). Educational areas discussed in this study are both internal and external in nature. Internal educational areas are those in which the consequences are generally confined to the school's operation. External areas are those in which there will be an immediate effect on the local community. Boyd (1976:567) opined that in the final determination of external issues, the "public's judgment" tends to carry more weight than the desires of the professional school staff. Both internal and external educational areas in relation to the community power structure will be explored.

For the purpose of this study, thirteen educational areas were discussed. These areas are:

1. Financial support for the public schools.
2. Instructional accountability.
3. Student discipline.
4. Employment of school personnel.
5. Athletics.
6. Selection of school superintendent.
7. School board membership.
8. Planning of new school facilities.
9. Curriculum offering in the public schools.
10. School budget expenditures.
11. Selection of textbooks.
12. School district reorganization.
13. School district purchasing.

Financial Support and School Budgets

The school board will make decisions which will have far-reaching consequences in local communities. Politically, school board decisions in most communities are areas of high interest and intense discussion in the local community. Two major decisions that a school board must make are: (1) the level of financial support and (2) the budget which is related to the operation of the school (Vidich and Bensman, 1969:2).

Gross (1958:53), in a study of Massachusetts public education, stated that the primary source of pressure against increased levels of support for public education was the local taxpayers' association. The taxpayers' association was usually composed of business firm representatives and old-line families. The second largest source of pressure mentioned by school superintendents was the local city council.

Administrative decisions in any organization tend to be related to financing. The financial aspects of these decisions are summarized in the budget. Thus, the budget is a statement in which resources are allocated to achieve the goals of the organization (Thomas, 1964:2).

In a study by Kirby (1971:2-3), a majority of seventy-seven school superintendents polled reported they had contacted groups or organizations which would be influential in deciding the future of financial projects. They reported considerable interaction between social leaders and business representatives in the local communities. James, Kelley, and Garms (1969:314-315) suggested that power structure " . . . types can be distinguished by differences in the sources of power and in the channels through which their influence is communicated."

School Board Membership

The composition of school boards as they are affected by the power structure has been well documented, and has been the concern of investigations such as Counts (1927), Brown (1955), Goldhammer (1955), and Hughes (1967). The members of a school board are often drawn from levels that are supportive to members of the local power structure (Hughes, 1967:33).

Goldhammer (1955:23-24) noted that school board members tend to perpetuate the power group in control, but it depends upon three factors. The factors are: (1) the acceptability of candidates to the power structure and (2) the general apathy of the local power structure to confront challenges to its supremacy.

Masters (1968:116-117) opined that the election of school board members affects every local school community, and the election of school board members tends to follow patterns of identifiable influences. Goldhammer (1955:23-24) concluded that though school board members claimed to represent the whole community, a study of their contacts and interactions revealed that associations were concentrated in narrow segments of the community.

School board members are "responsive to sources of political power." Consequently, the power structure make-up of a community will influence school board decision-making (Nunnery and Kimbrough, 1976:356).

Employment of School Personnel

The quality and direction of education in a school district are related to the quality of the professional teachers and administrators employed. Thus, the professionals employed exercise a control over a school district's educational program (Campbell and others, 1970:270).

The school board will make decisions which will have far-reaching consequences in local communities. Politically, school board decisions in most communities are areas of high interest and intense discussion in the local community, especially in the selection of the professional staff (Vidich and Bensman, 1969:2).

Neal Gross (1958:55) commented that personnel pressures in the areas of employment and dismissal do occur in the operation of public schools. In a poll conducted by Gross, 57 percent of the pressures came from school board members and influentials in the local community.

Eliot (1959:1,034) proposed, "Indeed, there seems to be a professional agreement that the most significant duty of the "people's" representative or the school board is the selection of the local school superintendent." McCarty (1959:2), concerning the "people's" representative, noted in a study of fifty-two school board members, that 54 percent were interested in achieving personal goals or were representing a special interest group.

Curriculum

According to Jennings (1972:298), the community power structure within various communities seeks to influence public school curriculum so as to instill local values and beliefs. The public school may be viewed as a political system, and the process between demand and implementation may be considered as being political.

Campbell and others (1970:463-464) suggested that the public's "aspirations" for their children shape the curriculum offerings found in the local school. Some parents insist that the school's mission be providing academic programs while others desire more vocational programs. Vidich and Bensman (1969:226) stated that the proportioning of agricultural/industrial curriculum as opposed to college preparatory programs is political.

Masters (1968:112) stated that groups and selected individuals who do possess power or money in a community will exert, or attempt to exert, pressure on a local school community when they feel the necessity to "shape and mold" the local school to their "way of thinking" or to develop the school's curriculum to meet their special needs. Jennings (1972:299) continues by suggesting that, since a school's curriculum tends to be political, advisory committees should be incorporated to help control input from the community.

Facilities Planning

Decisions concerning facilities planning in local school districts involve the "process of politics more than any other phase of community life." First, a building program requires a capital outlay; second, buildings are tangible items; and, third, the distance a child must walk or ride qualifies most persons to form an opinion about the need and location of the school building (Eliot, 1959:15-16).

Knezevich (1975:562) suggested that the school board, superintendent, and lay advisory committees should be involved in the school facility planning process. The school facility is a space interpretation of the curriculum. Thus, the learning space will influence the "type and quality of instruction."

School site acquisition is a major function of the administrative staff in a school district. As such, it brings staff members into a complex political relationship between school boards, agencies of city and county government, and influential groups in the community (Earthman and Bailey, 1975:4).

Textbook Selection

Nelson and Roberts (1963:24-25) have stated that there have been pressures on textbook selection in school communities since the Civil War. So mixed were the feelings over the historical accounts of the Civil War, that in 1897, E. J. Hale and Son of New York advertised: "Books prepared for southern schools, by southern authors, and therefore free from matters offensive to southern people."

The last major textbook controversy was in 1975, in Kanawha County, West Virginia. According to the anti-group, the English textbook selected for use in the public school "was anti-Christian, anti-American, anti-authority, depressing, and a very negative text" (National Education Association, 1975:2). According to the National Education Association (NEA) reporters, there was a power struggle between the two dominant groups in Kanawha County. The group in favor of the textbook was the more urban group of the county, and the group in opposition was the rural group of the county. In fact, the controversy had been described as a religious war "between people who depend upon books and people who depend upon The Book" (National Education Association, 1975:9).

School Discipline

Discipline persistently remains a crucial concern in the operation of the public schools by the community. Discipline and the control of students were considered the two greatest problems in the classroom (Gallup, 1978:1). The question of corporal punishment, the extent and the nature of discipline, and its social consequences have significantly been questioned by the public (Hensen, 1974:172). A pilot study for this research effort polled area school superintendents in Texas, who stated that discipline policy was an educational area which the local community power structure sought to influence.

Accountability

According to Gooler (1973:393):

> Accountability is deeply rooted in economics and politics. It addresses itself to the phenomenon of alienation, to the sense of lack of control of the citizens over the institutions that govern his life and conduct. In times of tight money, accountability will flourish.

Wynne (1972:ix) stated that when accountability pressure is applied to individual schools or districts throughout the nation, political groups will be involved with the operation of the local schools. Accountability means that the local educational institution will be held accountable for the educational progress of its students. Parents have complained that school boards are remote to the concerns of the parents regarding educational progress of their children. Thus, the 1970's have brought about the call for community control, breaking up the system, and giving control through accountability back to the people (Cronin, 1971:7-8).

School District Reorganization

One of the more important events in public education since World War II has been school district reorganization. One reason proposed for the difficulty in reorganization of rural schools has been the strong identification of community leaders with a given educational institution (Campbell and others, 1970:101).

While smallness is a problem in rural school districts, bigness in urban school districts presents its own particular problems. According to Cronin (1971:7-8), in city school districts, parents

complained that school boards take little positive action when either the progress or the safety of children is at stake. Consequently, this lack of input from parents has given rise to the idea of community control. In a decentralization plan passed by the New York legislature in 1969, the New York City school district was divided into thirty-three sub-districts each having a local school board. Although the central school board retained the power to employ and assign teachers, the "local board" greatly influenced the choice of principals and teachers employed in the individual sub-districts (Bell and Held, 1969:157-158).

Communication Techniques

The power structure of a community can make or break a proposed educational project. Unfortunately, school administrators have not been trained to find or cultivate the power structure in local communities (Mayer, 1974:129).

Schools are social institutions which depend upon favorable public opinion for their support. The way citizens think and act concerning the re-election of school board members, tax rates, curricular offerings, salaries, equipment, and special services will not only establish the limits of institutional functioning but will also influence policies and practices of the local school (Kindred, 1962:14).

According to Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1976:35), to understand a community a school administrator should understand the sociological characteristics of the community. Pertinent data the school superintendent should know are:

1. Existing needs and expectations of the citizens regarding public education.
2. Opportunities and means for effecting better cooperative relations with various community groups.
3. Immediate and long-range problems that have produced alterations in the community.
4. Identification of those individuals and groups who are friendly and unfriendly towards public education.
5. Channels through which public opinion is built in the local community.
6. Nature of the power structure and the areas of decision-making.
7. Leadership and leadership influence, and the number and types of organizations and social agencies existing in the community.

In this section, communication techniques employed by the school superintendent will be discussed. The major categories are: (1) power structure communication, (2) developing public opinion, (3) personal contacts, and (4) lay citizen committees.

Power Structure Communication

If a superintendent is to communicate with the local power structure, then he should have a knowledge of its characteristics and organization. According to Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971: 103-9), the following questions must be answered in the power structure assessment. They are as follows:

> What big decisions have been made that influenced community living within recent years? Who are the leaders who exercised the most power in these decisions? What are some impending decisions in the community and who are the persons actively influencing these decisions? How do the leaders work together and compete in exercising power? What beliefs about community living and community norms give direction to community leaders? What is the extent of citizen participation in community decision-making? What are the latest sources of political power that are not involved in decisions but which could influence decision outcome if they were activated?

Developing Public Opinion

Two major reasons to have a public relations program are to develop public opinion and to widen the base of political power for the school district (Unruh and Willier, 1974:125). Carter and Chaffee (1966:48) have suggested techniques to employ when introducing changes into the local school district:

1. Announce the possibility of a change and ask for opinions from the public about the proposed changes.
2. Report the opinions expressed about the change and the decisions reached, along with information concerning the time for reviewing the results of the changes.

3. Announce the time and place of the discussion that will evaluate the results of the change, and encourage citizens to attend and express their opinions.

4. Report on the evaluation discussion and the decisions reached as well as the time and place for any subsequent review of the change.

Bortner (1972:16, 232-233) suggested that the community survey can contribute to the realization of school objectives. These contributions are in the form of information which can help the schools to: (1) plan educational programs geared to the needs, interests, and problems in the community, (2) plan the number and types of organizations existing in the community along with their current and potential relationships to the school, (3) identify particular community trouble spots or conflict areas to which attention should be given, (4) assess the readiness of the community for change or innovation in education, (5) survey cross-sectional samples of public opinion, and (6) plan public relations programs and practices in a scientific manner, based upon a thorough understanding of the community, its public, and its leadership.

Personal Contacts

School administrators must know business, governmental, church, and civic leaders in the community. According to Mayer (1974:223), there is no substitute for personal contacts with local community opinion leaders. School administrators must learn to cultivate and develop community contacts:

Mayer (1974:223-224) specifically suggests that school superintendents should contact:

1. Business leaders so as to become familiar with owners and managers who are generally influential community leaders.

2. City and county governmental officers so as to understand the power structure in the courthouse.

3. Ministerial officers so as to become personally acquainted with these community opinion shapers.

4. Presidents of civic clubs so as to determine which organizations are supportive of educational projects. In addition, school administrators need to occasionally appear before the membership to speak on educational topics or concerns.

According to Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971:13), the communication interaction system of the power structure must be studied, and the school superintendent should establish functional ways of interchange with formal and informal power groups. Specifically, Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971:15) suggested:

1. School principals should be encouraged to establish and maintain contact with opinion leaders in their attendance areas.

2. The school superintendent should develop a communication network with influential leaders in the school districts so that (a) they would report to the superintendent immediately any adverse conversation about the school they feel to be of importance, (b) they would help judge public opinion on specific educational problems or issues, and (c) they would help the superintendent to transmit to the general public "big ideas" concerning educational projects.

Usdan (1963:44-58) studied techniques employed by school superintendents of New York State to communicate with legislators. The communication techniques employed were: (1) legislators were invited to participate in programs or to attend functions as guests of host school districts, (2) school superintendents would meet with legislators during informal luncheon affairs during which school problems would be discussed "off the cuff" with one another without fear of being misquoted, (3) school superintendents would meet with civic organizations to discuss educational issues upon which the school board had authorized the administrator to take a specific position, (4) school superintendents and building principals should communicate with lay people to help communicate with legislators on school matters, (5) school superintendents would communicate with legislators through written material, and (6) school superintendents would work through community organizations to elicit the support of the organization to contact legislators.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) (1950:140) stated the school superintendents should inventory the faculty as to their special interests and willingness to work in the area of public relations. From this inventory, the superintendent should develop a speaker's bureau to furnish community organizations with speakers on educational topics or issues.

Kindred, Bagin, and Gallagher (1976:155) suggested that school personnel, in developing a speaker's bureau, should identify the power structure and work carefully with these groups for community understanding and support of educational projects. Moehlmer and Van Zwoll (1966:266) also suggested the following:

> The socially alert superintendent will arrange to obtain complete information on the various social and economic groups through the participation of school personnel in the organizations. The more widely the community comes in contact with the teaching staff, the greater will be the understanding, confidence, and respect for the school and its achievements.

Lay Citizen Committees

Once the community power structure has been identified, representatives of the group must be involved in as many school-related activities as possible. Community power leaders should be represented on lay citizen committees such as "finance," "dress codes," or "human relations" (Mayer, 1974:223-9). Mayer opined (1974:228-229) that prior to deciding on a school issue, it is prudent for school administrators and boards to be involved in the thinking and advice of power structure representatives, such as a "blue ribbon" financial study.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This study was an attempt to gain information from Texas school superintendents for the purpose of determining the influence of the community power structure on Texas school board decision-making. The data presented in these findings should be valuable to superintendents in undertaking local community power structures and their impact on educational policy as well as in identifying useful techniques to communicate with the power structure.

This chapter contains the procedure followed in this study. The chapter is divided into three parts: (1) selection of the sample, (2) development of the survey instrument, and (3) treatment of the data.

Selection of the Sample

The initial step before surveying Texas school superintendents who constituted the population was the selection of the participating school districts. The Texas Sports Guide, 1978-79 (Towne, 1978) was used as the source for the representative random selection of 240 school districts by University Interscholastic League classification. The representative school districts were divided by four groups.

Group	ADA	Typical Athletic Classification	Number of Districts
I	Up to 700	A & AA	60
II	701-1,800	AAA	60
III	1,801-3,999	AAAA	60
IV	4,000 or more	AAAAA	60

Date Collection

The name and address of the superintendent and average daily attendance for each school district were secured from the 1978-79 *Public School Directory* (Texas Education Agency, 1978). In all, 240 questionnaires were mailed. The questionnaire, a letter explaining the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of individual response, and a self-addressed stamped envelope was mailed to each school superintendent in the sample. The initial response from school superintendents produced 123 questionnaires, or 51.2 percent. A follow-up letter was sent approximately two weeks later, and fifty-eight more questionnaires were returned. This brought the response to a total of 180 usable questionnaires, or 75 percent.

The response rate was above the 75 percent rate reported by Mouly (1963:255) for "reputable" questionnaire studies in a sample for dissertations.

Development of the Instrument

The data-gathering instrument was designed to meet the objectives of this study. An extensive review of the literature, as well as a pilot study, was considered necessary to generate information for the development of the survey instrument.

As the instrument was being developed during the fall school semester, 1978 a pilot study was conducted which helped to clarify, delimit, and refine the questionnaire. The panel consisted of twenty-five school superintendents within the state of Texas. The survey was conducted to insure the privacy of each respondent to the question.

Following the incorporation of all beneficial suggestions received from the pilot study, a validation committee was selected from school superintendents who were not a part of the sample in Arkansas and Texas. The validation jury was asked to review the questionnaire for clarity of expression, validity and appropriateness of educational items.

After all suggestions and comments had been received, the questionnaire was revised, resulting in a three-part questionnaire consisting of thirty-seven items. Part One was designed to collect data relative to the perceived type and size of school district. Part Two was designed to determine the degree of influence on selected educational areas of school board decision-making. Part Three was designed to determine the effectiveness of selected techniques to communicate with the community power structure.

Treatment of the Data

The perceptions of school superintendents concerning: (1) the type of community power structure affecting local school operation, (2) the degree of influence on selected educational areas by the community power structure, and (3) the degree of effectiveness of selected techniques employed by the school superintendent to communicate with the local community power structure, constituted the questionnaire data.

In Part One of analysis of the data, school superintendents' perceptions regarding the relationship between school district size and the type of community power structure were expressed by checking one of the four power structure categories, and by checking the size category of the district. Frequency distributions of these responses were compiled by the four school district size groups and by the four types of community power structures. The data were tabulated by frequency of occurrence and comparisons were made by groups.

In Part Two of the analysis of the data, school superintendents' perceptions of the degree of influence by the community power structure on each educational area was expressed by selecting a value for each response which ranged from 5 for "high or extremely high influence" to 1 for "no influence." The data were grouped by type of power structure and by size of school district.

For table display, the thirteen educational areas of school board decision-making were ranked according to an average score value. The average score value was obtained by multiplying the observed frequency of response times the value of influence assigned for each influence value so as to obtain a total score value. Then the total score value was divided into the number of respondents per power structure and school district size groups to obtain an average score value for each educational area by type of group structure and by school district size group.

In Part Three of the analysis of the data, school superintendents' perceptions concerning the effectiveness of communication techniques employed to communicate with the local community power structure were expressed by selecting a value for each response which ranged from 5 for "high or extremely high influence" to 1 for "no influence." The data were grouped by type of power structure and by size of school district.

For table display the thirteen communication techniques were ranked by the average rank score method and analyzed through an interval of effectiveness scale.

Chapter 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this study was an attempt to gain information from Texas school superintendents for determining the influence of the community power structure on school board decision-making. The data presented should be valuable to superintendents in understanding the local community power structure and its impact on education policies as well as in identifying useful techniques to communicate with the local power structure.

A total of 240 questionnaires were mailed to the representative sample of school superintendents in the state of Texas. The 180 usable questionnaires returned constituted a response rate of 75 percent.

Power Structure/School District Summary

The type of community power structure appears to be related to size. The smaller the school size group, the more likely the monopolistic type of power structure is evident. The larger the school size group, the more likely the democratic pluralistic power structure is evident.

The data in Table I indicate a majority (69, or 38.33 percent) of responding school superintendents identified the monopolistic power structure as the type influencing school and school relationships in their community. The second highest reported community power structure type was the democratic pluralistic with 49, or 27.23 percent. The third highest reported community power structure as influencing the school was the multigroup noncompetitive type with 37, or 20.55 percent. Least reported was the competitive elite power structure with 25, or 13.89 percent.

Table I

School District Size Groups by Perceived Community Power Structure

School district size group	Type of community power structure								Total	
	Monopolistic		Multigroup noncompetitive		Competitive elite		Democratic pluralistic			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Up to 700	31	65.96	7	14.89	4	8.51	5	10.63	47	100
701-1,800	12	30.00	9	22.50	9	22.50	10	25.00	40	100
1,801-3,999	15	30.06	13	26.53	5	10.20	16	32.65	49	100
4,000 or more	11	25.00	8	18.18	7	15.90	18	40.90	44	100
Total	69	38.33	37	20.55	25	13.89	49	27.23	180	100

School Superintendent's Perception of Community Power Structures

This section presents the collective perceptions of school superintendents regarding the degree of influence upon school board decision-making in each of four types of community power structures. The four types of community power structures examined were: (1) monopolistic, (2) competitive elite, (3) multigroup noncompetitive, and (4) democratic pluralistic. The data in Table II were obtained from school superintendents who identified the power structure type perceived to operate in their district. The degree of influence was indicated on a numerical scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being little or no influence and 5 being very high influence.

Power Structure Summary

All the power structures identified in this study tend to highly influence the educational areas of school board membership and financial support for the local public school district. It also appears that community power structures, regardless of type, reflect a consistent pattern of influence on the selected educational areas of school board decision-making.

Table II

The Relationship between Educational Areas and Four Community Power Structures

	Monopolistic		Competitive elite		Multigroup noncompetitive		Democratic pluralistic	
Educational area	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank
School board membership	3.88	1	4.48	1	3.75	3	3.44	2
Financial support	3.72	2	3.64	3	3.91	1	3.75	1
Planning of new facilities	3.62	3	3.68	2	3.48	4	3.28	3
Selection of superintendent	3.59	4	3.56	5	3.05	6	2.87	7
Athletics	3.53	5	3.60	4	3.78	2	3.22	4
Student discipline	3.17	6	2.88	8	3.32	5	3.02	5
School board expenditures	3.04	7	3.08	6	2.59	9	2.91	6
Curriculum	2.92	8	2.96	7	3.05	7	2.81	8
Personnel (employment and dismissal)	2.76	9	2.84	9	2.40	10	2.34	10
Instructional accountability	2.47	10	2.40	11	2.70	8	2.44	9
School district purchasing	2.40	11	2.28	12	2.29	11	1.03	13
School district reorganization	2.39	12	2.56	10	2.10	12	2.04	11
Selection of textbooks	1.88	13	1.92	13	2.08	13	1.91	12

School Superintendents' Perceptions of the Influence of the Community Power Structure on School Board Decision-Making by School District Size

Table III presents the collective perceptions of school superintendents regarding the degree of influence upon school board decision-making by school district size. The school size groups examined were: (1) up to 700, (2) 701-1,800, (3) 1,801-3,999, and (4) 4,000 or more.

School District Summary

All community power structures, by school district size groups identified in this study, tend to highly influence the educational areas of school board membership and financial support for the local public school district. It also appears the community power structures, regardless of size group, reflect a consistent pattern of influence on the various educational areas of school board decision-making.

Table III

The Relationship between Selected Educational Areas and Community Power Structures by School District Size Groups

	0-700		701-1,800		1,801-3,999		4,000 or more	
Educational area	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank
School board membership	3.74	2	3.70	1	3.57	2	3.93	1
Financial support	3.78	1	3.35	3	3.73	1	3.75	2
Planning of new facilities	3.38	5	3.32	4	3.48	4	3.36	4
Selection of superintendent	3.46	3	3.30	5	3.08	5	3.27	5
Athletics	3.46	4	3.50	2	3.52	3	3.40	3
Student discipline	3.04	6	3.00	6	2.89	7	3.13	6
School board expenditures	2.95	8	2.95	7	2.87	8	3.12	7
Curriculum	2.14	11	2.95	8	3.04	6	2.90	8
Personnel (employment and dismissal)	2.97	7	2.55	9	2.36	12	2.47	10
Instructional accountability	2.25	9	2.00	11	2.61	10	2.75	9
School district purchasing	2.08	12	2.00	12	2.59	11	2.22	12
School district reorganization	2.17	10	2.12	10	2.63	9	2.34	11
Selection of textbooks	1.72	13	1.92	13	2.18	13	1.75	13

Selected Techniques Employed by School Superintendents to Communicate with the Community Power Structure by Power Structure Type

Table IV presents the collective perceptions of school superintendents concerning the effective of communication techniques employed by school superintendents. The power structure types examined were: (1) monopolistic, (2) competitive elite, (3) multigroup noncompetitive, and (4) democratic pluralistic.

Communication Techniques

Summary for Power Structure Types

School superintendents in communities where there are two or more groups (competitive elite, multigroup noncompetitive and democratic pluralistic) vying for control of the local public school tend to employ indirect communication techniques; whereas school superintendents in communities with non-opposed power structures (monopolistic) tend to communicate more directly. The least preferred communication technique employed by school districts, regardless of type of power structure, was the use of "outside" community persons.

Table IV

The Relationship between Selected Community Techniques and Four Community Power Structures

	Monopolistic		Competitive elite		Mulitgroup noncompetitive		Democratic pluralistic	
Communication technique	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank
Develop channels of interaction with members of the power structure so that administrative position on educational issues may be known	3.33	1	3.23	5	3.17	7	3.27	5
Meet with governmental representatives to discuss important school issues	3.33	2	3.12	10	3.56	2	3.31	4
Develop channels of interaction with selected school board members so they may relate critical information back to the power structure	3.33	3	3.52	1	3.38	3	3.33	3
Join community organizations to expedite personal contacts with representatives in the power structure	3.28	4	3.34	2	3.35	4	3.21	8
Form lay citizen committees involving power structure representatives	3.24	5	3.20	6	3.10	9	3.54	1

Table IV (continued)

Communication technique	Monopolistic		Competitive elite		Multigroup noncompetitive		Democratic pluralistic	
	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank
Direct principals to communicate with opinion leaders in the attendance areas	3.18	6	2.80	12	3.11	8	3.02	10
Encourage staff member to speak before community groups on important school issues	3.15	7	3.33	3	3.59	1	3.26	6
Develop channels of interaction with members of the power structure so that selected influentials may help judge educational problems and issues	3.14	8	3.18	9	2.94	12	2.63	12
Form teacher advisory committees involving selected teachers which are influential in school/community projects	3.07	9	3.33	4	3.18	6	3.21	7
Develop channels of interaction with members of the power structure so that selected influentials may report adverse conversations about the school	3.02	10	3.09	11	3.02	11	2.85	11
Survey informally community power structure leaders to determine basic position on educational issues	3.01	11	3.20	7	3.03	10	3.04	9
Use "outside" school/community persons to communicate with representatives of the power structure (consultants, state department representatives, etc.)	2.61	12	2.68	13	2.70	13	2.56	13
Develop channels of interaction with members of the power structure so that selected influentials may help transmit key ideas to the public	2.15	13	3.20	8	3.31	5	3.33	2

Selected Techniques Employed by School Superintendents to Communicate with the Community Power Structure by School District Size

Table V presents the collective perceptions of school superintendents regarding the effectiveness of communication techniques employed by school superintendents to communicate with the local community power structure by school district size. The school district size groups examined were: (1) up to 700, (2) 701-1,800, (3) 1,801-3,999, and (4) 4,000 or more.

Communication Techniques

Summary for School District Types

School superintendents in small districts (up to 700) prefer to directly communicate with members of the local power structure; school superintendents in medium size districts (701-1,800 and 1,801-3,999) prefer to communicate with their local power structure(s) through social or civic organizations; whereas school superintendents in larger districts (4,000 or more) perfer to communicate with local power structure(s) either directly or through social or civic organizations. The least preferred communication technique employed by school superintendents, regardless of size of school district, was the use of "outside" community persons.

Table V

The Relationship between Selected Communication Techniques and Community Power Structures by School District Size Groups

	Up to 700		701-1,800		1,801-3,999		4,000 or more	
Communication technique	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank
Develop channels of interaction with members of the power structure so that administrative position on educational issues may be known	3.34	1	3.30	5	3.35	6	3.52	2
Meet with governmental representatives to discuss important school issues	2.97	7	3.46	2	3.46	2	3.59	1
Develop channels of interaction with selected school board members so they may relate critical information back to the power structure	3.32	2	3.32	4	3.40	3	3.52	3
Join community organizations to expedite personal contacts with representatives in the power structure	3.12	4	3.53	1	3.36	5	3.36	7

Table V continued

Communication technique	Up to 700		701-1,800		1,801-3,999		4,000 or more	
	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank	Average score	Rank
Form lay citizen committees involving power structure representatives	3.09	5	3.16	9	3.47	1	3.41	5
Direct principals to communicate with opinion leaders in the attendance areas	2.71	13	3.30	7	3.13	10	3.24	9
Encourage staff member to speak before community groups on important school issues	2.86	12	3.35	3	3.39	4	3.40	6
Develop channels of interaction with members of the power structure so that selected influentials may help judge educational problems and issues	2.92	9	3.14	10	3.00	12	2.92	12
Form teacher advisory committees involving selected teacher which are influential in school/community projects	3.02	6	3.21	8	3.20	8	3.30	8
Develop channels of interaction with members of the power structure so that selected influentials may report adverse conversations about the school	2.92	10	3.08	12	3.04	11	3.19	10
Survey informally community power structure leaders to determine basic position on educational issues	2.92	9	3.12	11	3.16	9	3.09	11
Use "outside" school/community persons to communicate with representatives of the power structure (consultants, state department representatives, etc.)	2.91	11	2.66	13	2.83	13	2.51	13
Develop channels of interaction with members of the power structure so that selected influentials may help transmit key ideas to the public	3.19	3	3.30	6	3.26	7	3.51	4

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consists of four sections. They are: (1) summary of the study, (2) findings and conclusions, (3) recommendations, and (4) recommendations for further study.

Summary of the Study

School administrators in general have not recognized the influence exercised by the community power structure on basic educational projects and policies developed by local school boards (Kimbrough, 1964:195). In addition, there has been a reluctance by school superintendents to recognize that educational decisions are not always made in formal meetings of the school board. There has also been a "reluctance" by school superintendents to become involved in the power structure to promote educational ideas (Kimbrough, 1964:195-219). Thus, the purpose of this study was an attempt to gain information from Texas school superintendents to determine the degree of influence of the identified types of community power structures upon selected areas of school board decision-making. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations should be valuable to school superintendents in understanding the local community power structure and its impact on local educational policies. It will also be useful in identifying useful techniques to communicate with the local power structure.

A total of 240 questionnaires was mailed to the representative sample of school superintendents within the state of Texas. The 180 usable questionnaires returned constituted a response rate of 75 percent.

Findings and Conclusions

The findings and conclusions of this study are presented in three sections. They are: (1) the relationship between four types of community power structure and four school district size groups, (2) the influence of the local community power structure on selected areas of school board decision-making by type of power structure and school district size group, and (3) the effectiveness of selected communication techniques employed by school superintendents to communicate with the local community power structure by type of power structure and school district size groups.

The four power structures examined were: (1) monopolistic, (2) competitive elite, (3) multigroup noncompetitive, and (4) democratic pluralistic. The four school district size groups studied were: (1) up to 700, (2) 701-1,800, (3) 1,801-3,999, and (4) 4,000 or more.

Relationship between Power Structure Types and School District Size Group

Findings and conclusions regarding the relationship between four types of community power structure and the four school district size groups are presented below. Size of district and power structure type tend to be related.

Findings for Type and Size

Relationship

The perception of school superintendents regarding the relationship between community power structure type and school district size groups provided the following findings. The type of community power structure appears to be related to size. The smaller the school size group, the more likely the monopolistic type power structure is evident. The larger the school size groups, the more likely the democratic pluralistic power structure is evident.

Conclusion

Analysis of the findings above would appear to support the conclusion that a strong individual or group tends to be able to dominate school and community policies in smaller communities. Whereas, strong individuals and groups tend to share the control of public policy in larger, more diverse communities.

The Influence on Educational Areas by Power Structure Types and School District Size Groups

The findings and conclusions regarding the influence on selected educational areas by power structure types and school district size groups are presented below.

Findings by Power Structure Types

The following major findings were revealed from the analysis of the data. The perception of school superintendents regarding the influence of the community power structure by type on selected educational areas provided the following findings:

1. All community power structures identified in this study tend to highly influence school board membership and financial support for public schools.
2. All community power structures identified in this study, regardless of type, reflect a consistent pattern of influence on selected educational areas of school board decision-making in districts of all sizes.
3. No significant difference was found among the four types of community power structure regarding the selected areas of school board decision-making.

Findings by District Size Groups

The following major findings were revealed from the analysis of the data. The perception of school superintendents regarding the influence of the community power structure, by school district size groups or selected educational areas, provided the following findings:

1. All community power structures, by school district size groups identified in this study, tend to highly influence areas of school board membership and financial support for public schools.
2. All community power structures identified in this study, regardless of size group, reflect a consistent pattern of perceived influence on the selected areas of school board decision-making.
3. All community power structures, by school district size group, tend to highly influence the areas of: (1) school board membership, (2) financial support, (3) planning of new facilities, (4) selection of school superintendent, and (5) school athletics.
4. No significant difference was found among the four school district size groups in relation to community power structures and their influence on selected areas of school board decision-making.

Conclusions

Analysis of the findings listed above would appear to support the following conclusions regarding the influence of the community power structure on selected areas of school board decision-making relative to power structure type and school district size groups.

1. Community power structures, regardless of type, reflect a consistent pattern of influence on selected areas of school board decision-making in districts of all sizes.
2. The community power structure, by type and by school district size group, tends to influence the more external policy areas of school administration—board membership, financial support, facilities, selection of superintendents, athletics, and discipline, as opposed to the internal policy areas—school expenditures, general curricular affairs, personnel, purchasing, and textbooks.
3. All community power structures seek to influence school board membership, financial affairs, and the selection of the school superintendent in their attempt to control the local school district.
4. It would appear that the monopolistic and the competitive elite power structure tend to influence more educational areas of school board decision-making than the multi-group noncompetitive and democratic pluralistic power structure, which may be size-related. The monopolistic and the competitive elite power structure tend to exist in the smaller communities and their influence is more evident; whereas, the multigroup noncompetitive and democratic pluralistic tend to exist in the larger communities which tends to diminish their influence because of the diversification of the communities.

The Effectiveness of Communication Techniques Type of Power Structure and School District Size Groups

The findings and conclusions regarding the effectiveness of communication techniques employed by school superintendents to communicate with the community power structure by power structure type and school district size groups are presented below.

Findings by Power Structure

Type

The following major findings were revealed from the analysis of the data. The perception of school superintendents regarding the effectiveness of communication techniques provide the following findings:

1. School superintendents in communities where there are two or more groups (competitive elite, multigroup noncompetitive, and democratic pluralistic) vying for control of the local public school tend to employ indirect communication techniques; whereas, school superintendents in communication with non-opposed power structure (monopolistic) tend to communicate more directly.
2. For all four power structure types identified in this study, school superintendents did not prefer the use of "outside" community persons to communicate with the local community power structure.
3. School superintendents perceive that their techniques in communicating with the local power structure are only moderately effective for each type of power structure.
4. School superintendents ranked the communication techniques of (a) personally contacting power structure members, (b) meeting with governmental officials, and (c) joining community organizations, as being effective in communicating with all power structure types.
5. There was no significant difference among the four community power structure types on the perceived effectiveness of selected communication techniques employed by school superintendents to communicate with them.

Findings by District Size

Groups

The following major findings were developed from the analysis of the data. The perception of school superintendents regarding the effectiveness of communication techniques provides the following findings:

1. School superintendents in small districts (up to 700) prefer to directly communicate with members of the local power structure; school superintendents in medium size districts (701-1,800 and 1,801-3,999) prefer to communicate with their local power structure(s) through social or civic organizations; whereas, school superintendents in larger districts (4,000 or more) prefer to communicate with local power structure(s) either directly or through social or civic organizations.
2. School superintendents for the four school district size groups ranked the communication techniques of (a) directly communicating with the power structure, (b) meeting with governmental officials, (c) indirectly communicating with the power structure through selected school board members, and (d) joining community organizations to directly communicate with members of the local power structure as being effective in communicating with their local power structure.
3. School superintendents for the four school district size groups did not prefer the use of "outside" community persons to communicate with the local community power structure.
4. There is a significant difference among the four school district size groups in terms of perceived effectiveness of selected communication techniques employed by school superintendents to communicate with their local power structure.

Conclusions

Analysis of the findings listed above would appear to support the following conclusions regarding the effectiveness of selected communication techniques employed by school superintendents to communicate with their local power structure by power structure types and by school district size groups.

1. School superintendents prefer to communicate with the power structure either directly or indirectly through school-connected channels rather than through "outside" third party individuals.
2. School superintendents perceived an inadequacy in effectively communicating with their local power structure regardless of power structure type.

3. With the exception of the superintendents with a perceived monopolistic power structure, school superintendents generally agreed that indirect communication techniques achieved the best resolution.

4. School superintendents in small school districts perceive direct communication techniques as being more effective in communicating with their local power structure; while school superintendents in larger school districts perceive both indirect and direct communication techniques to be effective in their school/community relationship.

5. School superintendents from larger school districts have more active communication programs than superintendents in smaller districts, likely because of additional support personnel.

6. School superintendents in larger school districts (4,000 or more) perceive they are more successful in communicating with the power structure, than superintendents do in the smaller districts (up to 700 and 701-1,800).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented for further consideration based upon the results of this study.

1. School superintendents and future school administrators need to identify the type of power structure operating within their school district and to become aware of the educational areas they typically seek to influence.

2. School superintendents and future superintendents should develop more effective techniques for communicating with the local power structure.

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